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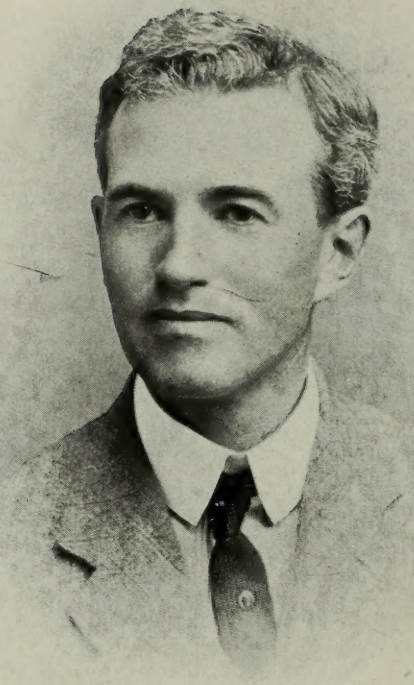
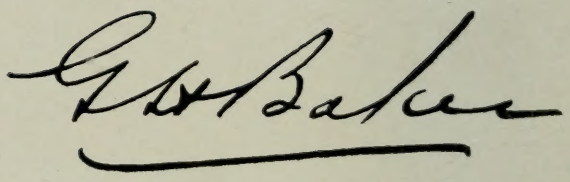
A Canadian Soldier





Glenmere
September, 1911

A Canadian Soldier

George Harold Baker, M. P.
Lieutenant Colonel 5th C. M. R.

Killed in action at Ypres
June 2nd, 1916

Printed for Private Circulation

University Printing Office
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A Canadian Soldier

George Harold Baker came of a United Empire Loyalist family, which had already contributed largely to the public life of the Eastern Townships, the Province of Quebec, and the Dominion of Canada. His great-grandfather, Joseph Baker, after the acknowledgement of American independence, left Petersham, Mass., with his young wife (Polly Stevens), and settled in the Township of Dunham, Missisquoi County, in 1793. Joseph Baker's son, William Baker, represented the County of Missisquoi in the last Parliament of Lower Canada from 1834 to 1837; he married Harriet Clap, of Montgomery, Vt., daughter of Joshua Clap and Nabby Barnard. George Barnard Baker, the third son of William Baker, took his degrees in arts and law at Bishop's College, which subsequently conferred upon him the honorary degree of D.C.L. In 1860, he established himself in the practice of law at Sweetsburg, and early in a successful professional career, he was made a Q.C., both for the Province and the Dominion. He served either in the Provincial Legislature or the Dominion Parliament almost continuously

for forty years; for some years in the seventies he was Solicitor General for the Province; he represented the County of Missisquoi in the House of Commons, 1870–1872, 1878–1887, and 1891–1896; he was called to the Senate in 1896, and was one of its most active members up to his death in 1910.

George Harold Baker's mother, Jane Percival Cowan, was the daughter of Peter Cowan, who with his brother Andrew was attracted by the natural beauty of the Yamaska valley about the beginning of the Victorian era and settled at Cowansville, to which they gave its name. At the time of his death in 1880, Peter Cowan was Sheriff of the district of Bedford; he came from Scotland as a youth and married Jane Elizabeth Hackett, a charming Irish girl who with her brother had come to Canada not many years before.

George Harold was the only surviving son of George Barnard Baker. He was born at Sweetsburg on November 4th, 1877, and was educated at Bishop's College School, Lennoxville, Berthier Grammar School, Berthier-en-haut, and McGill University. He graduated as a Bachelor of Civil Law in 1900 and was immediately called to the Bar. He began the practice of law with his father at Sweetsburg, and in 1907 became a member of

the firm of Chauvin, Baker, and Walker in Montreal.

At the general election of 1911 he became Conservative member of the House of Commons for the County of Brome, defeating the Minister of Agriculture in the previous administration. He took an active part in political life, and served as Conservative whip for the Province of Quebec.

From boyhood he took a keen interest in military service; he was gazetted Provisional Lieutenant of the 6th Hussars on June 18th, 1903, and on the organization of the 13th Scottish Light Dragoons in the following May he was transferred to that regiment with the rank of Captain; he was gazetted Major in December, 1904, and Lieut.-Colonel of the regiment on September 29th, 1913.

Immediately on the outbreak of the war, he and the officers of his regiment offered their services to the Government, and four months later he was empowered to raise the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles, the first mounted corps from the Province of Quebec, to the command of which he was appointed in January, 1915. Recruiting began in February, enlistments coming mainly from the Eastern Townships, although men were attracted from Montreal, where Colonel Baker lived and

practised his profession, and from other centres. A large number of university students, both from McGill and from Bishop's College, Lennoxville, joined the regiment, which went into training at Sherbrooke early in the spring.

On June 9th, Colonel Baker's friends of Brome County gave him a farewell dinner at Knowlton. Responding to the toast of his health, he said:

> I make no professions as a soldier, I lay claim to no special mission; my aim is to win, if possible, the confidence of my men and to leave the rest to circumstance and the turn of events.
>
> The memory of this gathering will follow me; you have strengthened my hand, and if ever I am in a tight place I shall try to acquit myself as you would have me.

The regiment was moved to Valcartier Camp on June 8th and embarked for England on July 17th, landing at Plymouth on the 29th. The cavalry formation was retained during further training at Shorncliffe Camp and for some time after the crossing to France on October 24th; but Colonel Baker and his men had agreed to respond to the demand for infantry and in January, 1916, a reorganization took place whereby the 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th C. M. R. became the 8th Infantry Brigade

under Brigadier-General Victor Williams, forming part of the 3rd Canadian Division under General Mercer's command. Colonel Baker's experiences during these eventful months were, of course, closely bound up with those of the Regiment (afterwards the Battalion) he commanded and of the Division to which he was attached. His fortunes and those of his men during their period of training at Shorncliffe Camp and on service in France and Belgium are best told in his letters home, from which the following extracts are made, partly for their interest as a contemporary record of the events they narrate, partly for the light they throw on the character and point of view of the writer:

Shorncliffe Camp
Dibgate
August 1st, 1915

I will begin at Devonport. We disembarked in tenders and went up to Plymouth and took train at 11:30 a. m. We arrived here at 8:30 p. m. Look at the map and you will see that we went all across the South of England. The country is beautiful beyond description, the finest thing I have ever seen. The land, of course, is highly cultivated and it looks like a garden—beautiful hillsides, trees, streams and picturesque houses, splendid cattle, horses and sheep. I didn't see one single poor cow, only two old horses all the day through. Women and wounded soldiers were the only inhabitants; I only saw two men capable of bearing arms. The enthusiasm is

wonderful: the women waved madly and threw kisses throughout the route—old and young alike. They must have seen scores of like trains that same day, yet the smiles were all fresh and original. At Exeter, where we arrived at 12:30, a committee of ladies served every man with a lunch, water bottle full of tea, orange and package of cigarettes. Our men were very happy and appreciative; I felt it to be a great day and I am sure they did, too. I never enjoyed a day's travel more. We had the little compartment cars and they afforded amusement to the men; the speed of the train though was quite modern.

This is a fine place with miles of beach. We can see the outline of France; when I tell you that a detachment of the 23rd left here at 8 p. m. and were in the trenches before daylight, you will know we are not far away.

Dibgate
August 19th, 1915

The hours are long; first parade 6 a. m. to 6:45; 8:30 to 11:45; 1:30 p. m. to 5 p. m.; lectures in addition. We had one night out with the Regiment and they behaved wonderfully well; the men are splendid. I am getting a good grip of things. I have learned such a lot here and I am learning every day. To-morrow we have a route march—out all day.

We are to retain our cavalry organization and be attached to the Canadian Army Corps. Army Corps troops garrison the city where the Army Headquarters are located and do odd jobs; discipline is very necessary. They never take over sections of trenches; they get fighting when a big show is on, but are brought out immediately afterwards. We shall not be in any division, but kept in reserve under General Alderson and sent wherever needed. There is no news about our going forward, but I should not be surprised if we went to France to complete our training.

Caesar's Camp
Folkestone, Kent
October 3rd, 1915

We are settled in our new camp here. Old Caesar's high hill is at our back and the city is at our feet. It is picturesque.

We have made a great record as a brigade in discipline at the rifle ranges. *The best yet,* the report says. We have our men well in hand.

I motored to Dover today with the Brigade Major. Just as we arrived a sea-plane was taking off. I wish you could have seen the graceful machine skim along the water like a huge bird and then rise into the air; it is a wonderful machine. You have seen a large waterfowl have some difficulty in leaving the water and finally rise into the air and increase its speed: that is exactly what a sea-plane looks like and does.

I quite often go to Dover and meet the naval officers; they are splendid men and most friendly. Their favourite haunt is at the Grand Hotel. There is a nice room there with a big open fire with a bar and barmaid in one end. They sit there and sip their whiskey and soda—in moderation. The maid is called "Bubbles;" she is pretty, modest, educated and as clever as the very devil. I have very seldom heard such wit: she can always go anybody one better—never coarse, never vulgar, and the men all respect her. It is really a treat to hear her talk. The whole surroundings are such a contrast to the American bar with the beast of a bartender, sawdust on the floor, and the guzzling public. This custom of barmaids is one of the strangest in this country. I don't see how they get such girls to do the job.

It is now 9:10—bedtime. I shall get up at 5 a. m. to-morrow to take the Regiment to the new Lydden Spout Rifle Ranges; they are nearer here than the Hythe Ranges, where we were before our move. The new ranges are about five miles from here on the high chalk cliffs, half way to Dover—a beautiful view, 480 feet above the sea and it is straight down.

Shorncliffe

October 20th, 1915

The Brigade was inspected today; the General says that it is the best, steadiest and neatest one he has seen. The men are really wonderful, steady as rocks; we could move out tonight within an hour, we are equipped to the last strap; everything is ready.

France

October 26th, 1915

"We're here because we're here." Where? Very comfortable in billets—farmhouse, staff together, each squadron in separate places.

The passage across the Channel was not too bad, much worse though than anything I have experienced, but I was not too ill. I will tell you something of where we landed—under canvas for two nights and very cold. The Salvation Army provided most comforts; they were splendid.

On arrival here we saw an air-fight—down came the German plane.

Everybody is happy and well, looking forward to further progress. Things are quiet here, and likely to be. A French farm wagon is just passing. It looks like a ship on wheels—high at the back, curving to nothing just over the front wheels, and the horses are harnessed at the end of a long pole.

Our food is excellent; we are warm and have good sleeping accommodation. In front of the farmhouse are manure pits—within four or five yards from the front door. The Germans were all over this country some time ago. I am just going off now to visit the Squadrons; my horse is at the door. I wish I could write more fully, but I won't be able to. Everybody is cheerful and confident; we have just received our maps and are locating ourselves.

Sherbrooke
April, 1915

France,
October 31st, 1915

A week has passed very quickly; we are most comfortable. You no doubt saw my letter telling about crossing the Channel. The first two nights were cold under canvas; since then our quarters have been most comfortable, nine officers in three small rooms with two stoves; the large French windows let in good fresh air. These awful manure pits in front of the houses are unsightly; these people place too much importance on fertilizer.

The weather is wet and the mud deep, but the food is excellent and the men's spirits high. I censor the letters: one devil said he had been out all night burying the dead! I cut it out.

We were inspected by the General and he was pleased. We move tomorrow—up front; there is no other move in this game. It is a great game, and as we advance it becomes natural and easy. I rode six miles up and back to see where we were to be located; the new accommodations are good, considering. I don't know how long we shall be there—probably ten days.

Don't believe that all the organization is on the German side. This is wonderful—everything at hand and no red tape. The class of officers we encounter is splendid; they will do anything for us.

We have a set of dishes—aluminium—which we use. The Sergt.-Cook prepares the meals and Hardy serves them—that is, the meals of the staff. The three squadrons are in different places within a radius of four miles. It is more difficult to handle the force scattered, but everybody is doing his job.

We had a little dinnerparty last night: the guests were the squadron commanders and two young ordnance officers who have done much for the Regiment's comfort.

This is not nearly as bad as you think: it is a question of chance and the chances are by no means all against you. I would not have missed this for anything: this is real life.

I have a bed—my sleeping kit on the top of the feathers. The Second in Command is on the floor on my right and the Adjutant on my left, the Medical Officer on the floor at my feet; the Veterinary Officer sleeps in the little office under the desks, the Paymaster, the Signalling Officer and Quartermaster in the dining-room on the floor.

The old woman's chickens are good; eggs 70 cents a dozen, butter 60 cents a pound, very good. However, the rations are ample and good.

The women here are not beautiful—very like our lower French Canadian types; the beauties must have fled. However, there are other things to occupy our attention. The little donkeys with fuzzy-haired long ears are interesting. I think I shall know how to speak French when I leave here; Captain Rhoades is already envious of my linguistic powers; he cannot understand! That's the reason why. The Signalling Officer is sitting at the table with a French dictionary, beginning his first lesson, or rather, wondering where to begin. He went into a shop the other day and said, "Parlez français dans quinze minutes?" and the girl answered "Oui, oui!" and trotted off and produced a book "How to learn French in fifteen lessons!"

France
November 6th, 1915

I spent my birthday in the trenches; I had a most interesting day; coming in at night I felt as if I was coming home. This is a great shack; one of our men made a stove out of a can that contained rifle oil, the stove pipe out of tin that the biscuits come in, and we are warm. It has a door and grates, and burns coal. We have two gas lights and are all sitting round the table. Coffee is on the stove and the Doctor says he will put some rum in it. If he does, we shall have a concert; with two teaspoonsful of that stuff I could sing myself. It certainly warms your heart. I am sitting on a box full of ammunition. The Second in Command put the rum jar—empty—on the stove and then into his bed as a warming pan;

that is the only way he takes his rum. The Adjutant came in with a brick for my bed—the Adjutant always looks after me.

I will try to draw a diagram of our stove. It is much more stable and secure than it looks. It dries out our blankets. The men get an issue of rum every night they are in the trenches. They are not there very long at a time. I can keep pretty clean, and we are really comfortable. I wish you could look in here. Talk of housekeeping!

A great many of my friends are about here. I cannot name them but they are here—all in the game. It is wonderful how quickly you get accustomed to this game and its noises.

Belgium
November 7th, 1915

I got letters dated 24th, 25th and 26th of October today; I was pleased. I had spent all day in the trenches: there was a great scrap and our first wounds were received—two men were slightly wounded.

It was interesting to watch the shells burst. The ones they call 'woolly bears' are very pretty. We put back ten to one; times have changed. Our chaps used to get ten to one and now the percentage is reversed; it makes a great difference. The old fellows who have been through it all are happy whenever our guns go for them. It is not nearly as bad as you would imagine. Our fellows take to the game like ducks to water; when their turn in the trenches ends they don't want to come out. However, that will wear off as the months go by.

We shall not be here long; I don't know the next move or when it will occur; one never knows anything about here. The last two days have been fine. I wish I could tell you where we are and all about it, but I cannot. The inhabitants have high cheek bones with a good deal of colour; the women and children come and go to church, to school and about their duties; old women hang out their clothes within reach of the guns—even with the shells bursting all around them. Most of the ladies who wear hats have gone to parts unknown—at

least to us; those who are left use shawls instead of hats. No bright barmaids here—good wine though and good food.

C Squadron is just in—two wounded, not severely. They are enthusiastic.

It will be quiet this winter, I believe. I am wondering what will happen in the Balkans; it will make a difference in the length of the war.

Belgium
November 25th, 1915

We shall only be here about eight days and then return to our old quarters. Our men are as keen as mustard; it is a real treat to go along and discuss the situation with them. They are all figuring out some way to get at them; it is a slow process. The organization is wonderful; I wish you could have a look at all this show—it is a big theatre. I am enjoying it, and I am daily glad that I live in this time to see it all.

Belgium
November 29th, 1915

I am in my dugout 7x7x7 ft., with two bunks, shelves and table and oil stove. Capt. Rhoades sleeps here; we are most comfortable. We have been here six days and shall remain two more, when we shall return to our old place, where we were when we came over.

We have done a lot of hard work—good work, too—and at the same time held a little of the Empire's line. We have thus far gained a good reputation as a regiment of hard workers.

Things have been very quiet in the fighting line and we have had good luck thus far—one wounded and one killed—but I am touching wood. You didn't know either of these cases; one, however, was a Bishop's College man; it was just a chance shot—hard luck. The wounded man is very happy because he will get a rest and away for a little.

If you ever hear anybody argue that the majority of men have more or less a yellow streak, don't you believe them;

these chaps are as brave as anybody could be, and heroes every one of them; when they are a little more seasoned, nothing will beat them.

Belgium
November 30th, 1915

Don't believe all the awful things you hear; the writers usually don't believe them themselves. All these new conditions come along gradually and one gets quite accustomed to them. Most of this life is really very pleasant; at odd times one comes across disquieting things, but these conditions are far between.

I can hear the old guns now, sliding heavy stuff over my head to the Germans; we give them more than they can send. It is a great satisfaction to be able to ring up the guns of all sizes and ask them to throw a few over, just for luck. There are splendid relations between the different branches of the Service, and everybody is quite ready to lend a hand; we never ask in vain. In the old days they might have said, "Sorry old man but we haven't any shells." You would realize the difference, if you were in this old dugout and the Germans were throwing shells at you.

Our men have done splendidly; they have measured up well under real conditions. I often used to wonder whether they would be good at the real work, and they are. I am constantly at them not to take chances; on principle, I play as safe as I can. It is wonderful how quickly you get used to the business and never worry about their shot and shell.

We move back a little way to-morrow and in four days more further back again to where we were when we arrived in the country.

We are fighting hard against trench feet—not frozen feet, but a condition that develops from standing too long in the same socks and boots, on damp ground and in water. I have had a drying dugout constructed where the men can take off their boots and dry their socks; if they do that every twenty-

four hours there is no danger of 'trench feet'; so far we have not had a single case.

I haven't any idea what our next duty will be; we have this time relieved a lot of chaps, who have been here on and off (tours of duty) for three months; they will find their old hunting ground much improved and we are glad to do it for them. Take off your hat always to any man who has been a year at this game, particularly the infantry.

We have all had colds more or less, but most of us are fit again; I have not missed a day's duty yet; it took us a little time to get accustomed to the new climate and conditions.

It gets dark here about 4 p. m. and not light in the morning before 6:30—long evenings, but they are useful for getting work done. I usually go through the trenches every night between 9 p. m. and 2 a. m.; we have had a bright moon for several nights.

France
December 9th, 1915

We have moved again. These are the best billets we have yet had; the people are splendid; they look after us well. I have a canopy bed, Louis XV—bridal effect! The Officers' remarks are good; they look in at me and give me the benefit of their observations. I have real sheets—the first for ages. We have a white table cloth, too, real chairs to sit upon, and stoves to warm and cheer our hearts. Incidentally, there are four pretty girls in the family, who try very hard to see that we want for nothing; they are really nice, pretty girls. This farmhouse has the manure pit at the back instead of at the front—very superior! But I don't notice a great deal of difference in the smell; I think it would require a practised nose.

I had a bath yesterday—a tin arrangement in a sort of summer outhouse, where garden tools might be kept; a heater is installed and water heated by a Belgian boy; after the performance, the boy drags the bath out into the courtyard and tips it out, goes at the tub with a brush and makes ready for the next victim.

The weather is bad, wet, but not cold; we are all quite well. As you see we are out of the trenches; how long we shall stay out nobody knows.

France

December 11th, 1915

I think the last time I wrote to you, I was living in a lean-to behind a small brick house near the front line; or had I moved back to a large hut? I think perhaps I had. Since then I have moved twice, once to a very attractive farmhouse with mother and four daughters; did I write from there? This afternoon we moved over here, a farmhouse with decent people, half a mile from our first billets when we came to France. Second in Command, Medical Officer, Adjutant and myself in one house; the Quartermaster, Paymaster and Veterinary Officer in the next house; we intend to mess together here. Our cooking is done in an outside cookhouse with big chimney; the woman of the house allows us to use her oven when we indulge in baked food.

I have an old ark of a bed, which I intend to strip and put my kit on the boards or slats; I cannot sleep on a soft bed any more; I tried it for two nights and had a wretched time of it; it is astonishing what one can get accustomed to.

We shall be here about four weeks; reorganization is in the wind—nothing definitely settled yet. Our organization is not satisfactory for the trenches, and we shall get more men—two battalions to be made out of the three regiments in the brigade—strength of each battalion 1,100 men. You can understand that such reorganization will take a good deal of time, so don't worry about trenches in the meantime; we are very comfortable here.

The sound of our big guns when we were up in the front was interesting; as usual, it did not disturb my sleep; I can sleep through anything but a direct hit.

The sapper was right in his report about the trenches; they were awful—regular water courses; we fixed them up well,

but I don't know what will happen if it rains all winter; the old heads seem to think they will hold out. The rats are numberless—thousands of them—but I grew to rather like them; they were company.

Our men were very cool under fire. It is quite interesting to hear the shells coming over; they sound like an express train; it does not take long to learn to lie down when they strike. It is astonishing how near to you they can explode and do no damage. The worst feature is that the communication trenches—those through which you usually reach the front lines—have fallen in, and it is necessary to go overground; at night it is quite safe, but in the daytime it is another story. I was lucky in having a well-covered route to go in and out by; the bullets sometimes whistled overhead, but not too close to be comfortable; it is strange how soon one grows accustomed to the whole business. We kept the snipers down pretty well; they were never safe a minute. The Germans use a lot of fixed rifles, that is rifles fastened—stationary, aimed at a particular point, and a man just pulls the trigger off and on, any old time. We soon knew where the bullets were likely to land and avoided that place.

Our men's spirits are high. I have often heard them singing standing in mud eight inches deep; they loved the front trenches.

France

December 15th, 1915

We were sixteen days in the trenches—that is, in the front line of reserves. The men behaved well; they are brave and cool. My men are splendid; they will make a good record for themselves, I am convinced. If I had two youngsters I don't think I would enjoy this game as much as I do. The only frame of mind to tackle this job is "Well, this is my last job, here goes." It doesn't do to look forward to something else at some future time; that idea slows a man down and he then begins to weigh chances. Chances must not be weighed—

there is no time for such things. The plan is—jump in, take whatever is coming, and if you come out all right, as we probably shall, then you are just so much ahead of the game.

Politics seem a long way off here, and not very interesting. I would not have missed this for anything.

We shall have a jolly Christmas here; everybody is in high spirits—living while the living is good, and not grumbling. We get very little news, but what there is of it is not too unfavourable. The thing that will win will be the pluck and high spirits of the men—nobody can down them. They sing when ordinary people would mourn—I admire them.

France

December 25th, 1915

This is Christmas Day. We are gathered about a fire in a big room enjoying ourselves. Last night the staff officers and I gave the rest of the officers a dinner in our billets. It was a howling success; we surprised ourselves. Tonight we go to "C" Squadron—Major Stockwell; New Year's night to "A" Squadron—Major Draper.

While we are out to dinner this evening the Sergeants are to have this room for their celebration; it is really a splendid room. The men are all having a special dinner—a sit-down one in most cases. I have wished them "A Merry Christmas," and they looked as if they were having it. My parcels have all come, but there are countless ones belonging to the men which have not yet arrived; they will come later. The boys you know are doing well and seem happy. I saw them this morning and wished them "A Merry Christmas." "Merry" is the right word, even if it is at the front; everybody's spirits are equal to the occasion.

It rained a little while this morning, but cleared about 11 o'clock. The Brigadier spoke to the Regiment and said some very nice things about their first work in the trenches.

This is a very pretty country. I never realized it until the other day when I went up to the top of one of these little hills.

The hill looks like a toy—one of those new clay toys. It has a chapel, a monastery with high walls, a crucifix, a wind-mill and small houses, a few animals stuck about at odd angles. From the top you can look off for miles. The colouring is beautiful. We remained up until the sun went down—beautiful colours in the sky, bright sunset colours in the west and beautiful grays in the east, tall trees standing out in long rows —high trunked trees with foliage only at the top, like phantoms in the weak light. The colours of the old buildings are wonderful—reds, brick-reds, greens, dark and light, splashes of yellow and bronze, with the fields about still green. It is a great relief to one's mind to look at such things and forget present occupations.

Happy New Year!

France

January 4th, 1916

The reorganization is complete. The regiment remains; we get half of the 6th C. M. R. and more reinforcements. We are now infantry. I remain, so also do many of my officers. The new Battalion has the same number as the old regiment. We are very lucky to retain so much of our identity, but our good record did more for us than anything else. We are going to have a splendid battalion—the very best. My year's experience has done wonders; I know my job. We are all quite well and do not expect to return to the trenches for a few weeks. You can realize that living in billets under our conditions of reorganization and training I have not much news to give you. I am pleased about the sock campaign; now that the Battalion contains twice as many men the supply will need to be larger, but with what I have on hand (about 1,200 pairs) and what I shall get through E—— it should be sufficient. I am saving a large stock for the trenches.

Our Christmas was jolly. We had several excellent dinners; I wish you could have seen them; they would have done credit to normal civil life.

Valcartier
July, 1915

Belgium
February 2nd, 1916

I am living in a terrace—underground, thank you. My own room is comfortable, with good bed. The mess-room is cheery, the quarters are not cramped. Everybody is glad to be on the job again. I was down at the front line this early morning; the weather was beautiful and I think altogether it was the happiest and most pleasant morning I have had at all.

This room must be eight feet high and 8x10. Good ventilation, a nice little table and good stove. If I leave my door open I don't need a candle.

Belgium
February 9th, 1916

The new Battalion works splendidly. Our work was commented upon in the presence of the senior officers. I feel I have as good officers as any battalion in France and a much superior lot to most; they are developing beyond my highest expectation. The success was not gained without hard work and foresight, but the results have repaid me tenfold. It is not easy to jump from one branch of the service to another with any degree of success without big effort—and everybody has made the effort. A few more tours and we shall be veterans at the game.

I find the reckless devils in billets are the fellows that do the business up here. I had one of the great offenders paraded today to be complimented for cheerful spirits under very heavy shell fire. He was so confused that he tried to salute with both hands, whereas he would have taken a long sentence at hard labour with a wink of an eye. Young Robertson was paraded for conspicuous work under the same fire. He went out and mended telephone wires under fire and finally took the telephone out to a shell hole in the rear of the trenches and opened up communication when the shells were flying in every direction. He is the sort of stuff V. C.'s are made of.

Excuse me for talking so much about these fellows. I feel like a proud parent telling about his wonderful kids—only these chaps are not kids.

Belgium
February 10th, 1916

More changes have taken place. I am the last; the others of my rank of the old Brigade have all gone. We have about a hundred new men to bring us up to strength; they are a fine lot. They were on a working party last night. It was a strange experience for them: the bullets were thick, and the old men with them would flop into a hole at the right time; the new ones would stand still! It didn't take them long to learn. We are doing a tour in the front line and thus far it has been successful. We must make good now because we are on trial. This is no time to make mistakes or do indifferent work, and everybody is alive to the importance of the occasion. D—— and G—— are in line for promotion. There will be others before many months pass; all the youngsters are capable of taking the next step up.

Our quarters here are very comfortable—clean, dry huts with stoves, good beds and plenty of fresh air. Socks are a great boon and we are independent.

I expect to go to London on leave before very long. England will seem nearer because of the cable communication.

France
March 3rd, 1916

I got high praise again today from the General—best battalion in the Brigade—wonderful O.C., etc., etc. I am getting suspicious of all these nice sayings—anyway, I shall continue to saw wood. We have a good battalion—I have a fine lot of loyal, whole-hearted officers; they cannot be beaten over here. I hope we shall get our own line to look after—we shall, I think, soon; then we can have things as we wish. We are in

billets again—I am happier further up front; there is great satisfaction in doing a real job—something that takes a man to do. We came near moving last night—all disappointed when it fell through.

France
March 4th, 1916

I hope my letters and cable from London were passed on to you. I had a fairly good holiday—one or two interesting things—but on the whole I was glad to get back *home*. I have a real family here, and I think they were glad to see me back. Did I tell you about meeting a niece of Lord Roberts in a railway carriage going from Shorncliffe to London? My uniform was responsible for a very pleasant conversation. She was the wife of a Lieutenant-Colonel who was at home ill—too ill, I gathered, to return. We were alone in the carriage and just before reaching London two other officers got in. She looked quite shy; she was a dear thing.

We shall take over a piece of the line one of these days. It will be fine to have a piece of our own—we can run it as we choose. We have learned a good deal about lines; the experience here has been invaluable. Time flies but it is a little humdrum back here in billets. I like the front line better; it is real business up there, and there is no limit to what can be accomplished.

It has been snowing; like our sugar snow, it doesn't remain long. The winter's back is broken and we can look forward to fine weather within a few weeks. We have really not had a bad time at all. You have no doubt seen the news about Verdun and Ypres. We had a pleasant experience the other day—a sort of warning for a hurry-up call. The men were delighted at the prospect, but later were disappointed at having to carry on as usual.

I am getting six new officers. The old officers are all well—making good.

I am looking forward to my next leave as a boy does to Christmas on December 26th!

Belgium
March 20th, 1916

You will notice that my country changes often. It will remain the same now for a few weeks. Last night I had a very comfortable hut to myself; tonight I sleep in a different place —I haven't seen it yet. It is wonderful how easily we move about now; it would try the organization powers of some of the new battalions to follow us. This is a very noisy place, but I slept through all the bangings last night without a stop. Summer is coming, or rather Spring—the sun is warm and the rain has held off. The clear weather gives the airplanes a chance to observe us. D—— is going on leave to-morrow. I have been back three weeks now; it will soon be my turn again—only *two* months more.

The officers and men are in good condition. Six new officers came; four are Ontario men and splendid specimens.

Belgium
March 31st, 1916

If I could only tell you things, it would be easy to write letters, but I cannot.

I don't suppose you know where we are at the present time. I have seen some real war scenes the past week. At night ruined houses stand out in the light caused by the flash of our artillery and the German flares. There is the galloping of the transport, the rumble of ammunition columns, with the infantry moving in and out among the shadows—but it all seems less abnormal than you would imagine. I find myself plodding along to a chicken-netting bed I know is waiting for me where I shall get comforting sleep. The moving human objects are whistling and singing, cheerful and courageous; they are wonderful.

Belgium
April 4th, 1916

We have no sickness; it is wonderful how everybody keeps well. I ran up about 300 pairs of your socks the other night

when the men's feet were wet; they were fearfully pleased. They refuse to send their socks out to be washed with the others of the Division. They prefer doing them themselves; they say they send out beautiful socks and get back old ones from the wash. So much for your efforts. We have an abundance at present.

Belgium
April 10th, 1916

We are trying to make a fife and drum band. They will march us to the trenches the next time. There are several fine English Bands about here. They give concerts and the music is splendid for the men's spirits; it is very restful.

I discovered my mare Morning Glory. She is ridden by the O. C. of one of the battalions in this Brigade, and he is very fond of her. I cannot get her back until he finishes with her. She is in excellent condition and well cared for. She goes to the Officers' mess every morning for her ration of sugar; she is keeping up her old habit.

I have a good horse of which I am very fond, Barney by name. He is a thoroughbred and a very fast steeplechaser. We understand each other well.

Belgium
April 10th, 1916

This is a h—— of a place, something doing every minute; our old place was like a haven of rest in comparison. I am just now living in a canvas hut with Major Draper; it is comfortable but not shrapnel proof. So far they haven't thrown anything at us. We move before long; it is one 1st of May after another. I have lived in everything from a chateau to a stable, and strangely enough have been comfortable in all.

Last night a bomb dropped from the blue, blue sky and interrupted a dinnerparty given by the sergeants; no damage

was done. Rhoades and I were the guests. We had reached cigars, so everything had been eaten—it was a great feast; soup, chicken, salads, jelly, champagne, etc., etc. It went right from soup to nuts, and then the crash—just as the programme was about to begin. All lights had to be put out.

One can see a great deal in a few days. How long it will last nobody knows. We are getting a little reputation for scrapping. The old Hun gets all that is due to him when we are in the line. We hit him with everything from a brick to a 60-pound mortar. The officers are wonderful—the best lot I have seen anywhere.

Have you seen the Bystander stuff, Captain Bairnsfather's *Fragments from France?* Get it if you can. It is all true to life—very funny to look back upon, but not a bit funny to experience. You feel as if you cover at least ten acres when you lie down during shelling. Don't believe anybody who tells you they enjoy shelling; there is no poetry in it. We get a rest every so often, and, strange to say, before the time is up we are all anxious to get back to the excitement. I almost think I would rather be a private. The responsibility of a thousand men is great. It is all right in times of peace, but another thing altogether over here.

This game does not make a man younger. I am not quite so stout, but much more active—I can lie down as fast as anybody. The exercise keeps one fit; I can run as fast as I ever could. We are a very happy family after all—I have no complaints and have been lucky—touch wood. I have a fine squad of snipers—Mr. German hasn't a look in with them. We are having a little dinnerparty tonight. I hope the sky won't let loose another infernal machine. It is strange how merry we keep if there is half a chance.

Belgium
April 26th, 1916

Time flies here; I am occupied every minute. I am still living in these little dugouts, and often wonder how I shall

become accustomed to anything else. I shall be a hobo after this; I am sure the War will create many such.

The youngsters have decorated my cabin with pictures from *La Vie Parisienne*. Some of the *specimens* are very good, and cleverly done. I have to keep explaining to the visitors that the younger bloods are responsible for the gallery—just so they won't think I am a d—— old fool.

E—— C—— is off to London. He has that magic travelling warrant in his pocket and his heels are snapping down the trench. I know just how he feels. We are all the same: we never want to be hit when we are going on leave, and we never think much about the subject at any other time. Some of the men have just come along, panting and excited; they too are off for London; it would do you good to see them. They look upon all bursting shells with suspicion.

Belgium
May 5th, 1916

We are resting, living in a comfortable little hut and sleeping in pyjamas. This is the greatest luxury; I have sometimes slept in my clothes for two weeks. Everything is going well. We have sometimes had seats in the very front row of the show—but never really in it.

I saw Morning Glory day before yesterday; she is in the pink of condition. I hope some day to have her back.

Belgium
May 9th, 1916

We are getting on well and having very good luck (always touching wood of course); we have had prominent seats in some of the little shows around here but have not been seriously affected yet. Many of our men are very anxious to try a drive; I am sure they will give a good account of themselves. We are fast becoming old stagers—eight months is a long time in certain places under these conditions. We are playing base-

ball now that we are out of the line; I enjoy it all. The men are all surprised, but I can run bases with any of them; I suppose they think I am old. I cannot get on to first base as easily as they do, but that may come later.

Belgium
May 10th, 1916

We have had an easy two weeks, playing baseball and football; games are a great tonic. To-morrow afternoon we are giving a ministrel show. I understand the talent is showing up well; P—— can sing a nigger song with anybody.

We have a band—fife and drum; it is young and weak yet, but is daily developing. It is inspiriting for the men when they come out of the trenches. I appreciate the effect it has on me; I can march quite contentedly when I am tired and when otherwise I would be sympathizing with myself.

E—— C—— is back from London full of the real time he had. I am waiting to get my leave about June 5th or 6th.

The runner is going to the transport lines where our post office is, so I must stop and send this along. **** This is hoping we meet in London.

The hope expressed in the last sentence was, alas! not to be realized, for Colonel Baker was killed while his sisters were on their way across the Atlantic. Two other letters, addressed to the widow of one of his officers, are given below, the second one being the last he wrote:

Belgium
May 25th, 1916

My Dear Mrs. Pilcher:

We were relieved from the front line last night and I hasten to give you the particulars of the dreadful affliction suffered

by you and this Battalion in the death of your husband, Major Pilcher. He was killed while in command of his Company in the front line, by a 4.2 high explosive German shell. He was standing in the main trench near Lieut. Macdonald, one of his officers, when the shell burst between them. Both unhappily were killed instantly. There was no suffering; it was so sudden that they could hardly have realized that the shell was coming in their direction.

He lies now in a little graveyard a short distance behind the front line in a grove of trees. A record of the grave is kept, and when we return to the line this week we will erect a cross. A temporary cross is already in place. The grave will not be disturbed. His body is wrapped in a second large blanket in case you wish to have him removed later on.

The Major was a brave, gallant officer, respected and beloved by his fellow officers and men. He had qualities of real leadership. He always demanded and received the close cooperation and support of officers and men under him. He was one of the strong rocks to which this Battalion was anchored. His place cannot be easily filled. It is the first break in our original family of officers and our grief grows keener each day.

We have spoken of you and your son times without number and our hearts have ached for you. We send you our whole-hearted sympathy.

Your husband's memory will live for ever in this Battalion, and History will record his name among the heroes of this great conflict.

We have sent on his personal effects through the proper channels and I trust you will receive them in good order.

If any of us can ever be of service command us and it will be a pleasure to obey.

Yours most sincerely,

G. H. Baker,
Lt. Col., O. C.
5th C. M. R. Battalion.

Belgium
May 29th, 1916

Dear Mrs. Pilcher:

Your letter of May 25th came to-day; I am dreadfully sorry to think of your suspense. We loved your husband and would sacrifice everything to spare his family needless suffering. The rule of the Canadian Army is that all casualties must first be reported in Canada. That is why your Canadian friends received the news first. We sent your address to headquarters the minute it happened and thought they would wire you. We were in the front line, powerless to act.

His death occurred on May 19th. The shell struck him in the right side. His face was not disfigured.

I have already written to you—so also have his junior officers. He was like a big brother to them. He always kept them in hand and yet had their deep affection. They thought there was nobody like their Major, and they were right.

If things go well I shall be in London about June 4th and if you are then within reach I will go to see you and perhaps I can answer some questions you would like to have answered.

My address will be Hotel Cecil for the first few days of my stay there. I have tried to tell you everything.

With renewed assurances of deepest sympathy shared by the whole Battalion, I remain,

Sincerely yours,
G. H. Baker.

Early in March, the 3rd Canadian Division to which Colonel Baker's Battalion belonged, had moved up into the famous Ypres salient. The morning of June 2nd found the 5th C. M. R. holding the second-line trenches in a part of the salient known as Maple Copse. The centre

of the first line, immediately in front of them, was held by the 1st C. M. R., who had to their left the Princess Patricia's and, beyond the fringe of Sanctuary Wood on that side, the Royal Canadian Regiment; the front on the right was held by the 4th C. M. R. The best short account of what was first known as the third battle of Ypres and afterwards officially named the Battle of Sanctuary Wood, was given in the London *Times* of June 12 by its special correspondent at the front, under date "British Headquarters, June 8":

It is now possible, from the narratives of those who were engaged in it, to furnish a description of the early stages of the fighting on the Ypres salient, which began on June 2. The enemy opened his attack on about 3,000 yards of our front line running from slightly south of Hooge to north of Hill 60, and, in spite of the counter-attacks, most gallantly pressed, of the Canadians on June 3, he remains in possession of the greater part of the ground which was lost the previous day. Four days later the Germans attacked our positions at and north of Hooge, and captured the front line trenches which ran through what remains of that much-fought-for village. Our front line, therefore, now runs behind the village of Hooge, so that this extreme point of the Ypres salient has been flattened by it, and what was its outermost angle is now in German hands.

All that we are now concerned with is the original attack of June 2. Whatever its future developments may be, it has already grown to be much the biggest engagement that there has been on the British front since Loos, and for the Canadians, who were almost exclusively concerned, it has been the heaviest fighting that they have done in the whole war. It has throughout been of the most sanguinary character.

How suddenly the attack began is shown by the fact that General Mercer and General Williams, who are among the missing, had gone into the front trenches because it was a clear and quiet morning, suitable for observation. When last seen by our men, General Mercer was suffering badly from shock, and was quite deaf, as a result of shells bursting near him, but he was, so far as is known, untouched. General Williams, with whom was Colonel Usher, had been slightly wounded in the head. Both had taken shelter in a well-protected dugout known as 'the Tube,' and they appear to have been there when the Germans came into the trench.

The narratives of all the battalions in the front-line trenches agree as to the suddenness with which the bombardment began over the whole area attacked, and the terrible and, so far as this front is concerned, the unprecedented severity with which it continued, without interruption, for over four long hours before the infantry attack was made. The weapon which the Germans are

now chiefly using is the 5.9, but every other sort of gun was employed, including heavy howitzers, naval guns, and trench mortars, with high explosive, shrapnel, and lachrymatory shells.

In such a position as this, at the angle of a salient, the place attacked can be subjected to a concentrated fire from all sides, but quite apart from this local condition, the immense weight of artillery now used, in proportion to their size, in all attacks on this front has given the fighting of the last few weeks a new character. Artillery fire is not now used merely to demoralize the enemy or break up formations. It is used to annihilate, to obliterate every form of defensive work, and make life itself impossible on every yard of the ground attacked. I will not labour the point for the benefit of the makers of munitions at home. What I desire now is to make it thoroughly understood that this is the general rule, the formula, of all attacks nowadays, and that, in this particular case, it was this kind of fire which the Canadians had to stand and take hour after hour, without any possibility of using a rifle in reply. There is no shadow of a difference of opinion as to the fact that no troops on earth could have behaved with greater steadiness or more admirable gallantry than they did.

It is not desirable to mention regiments or brigades by name or to individualize battalions by their true numbers, beyond saying that the troops engaged included units of the Princess Patricia's

Light Infantry, the Canadian Mounted Rifles, the Royal Canadian Regiment and the Canadian Infantry. The northern end of the line attacked, just south of Hooge, was held by the Patricias, and here, in the Sanctuary Wood, was fighting of the most desperate kind. The 'wood' now is a mere ghost of what the name implies. There is little greenery or shelter; nothing but a certain remnant of ragged stumps and bits of splintered boles. To the south, occupying the middle of the ground covered by the enemy's concentrated fire, were battalions of the Canadian Mounted Rifles. Here the trenches are out on the flat in a region where the soil a few feet below the surface becomes water, so that defensive works of any depth, capable of resisting modern shell fire, are impracticable.

It was hell—there is no other word for it—over the whole line; hell minute by minute and hour after hour, and not only over the front line itself, but in the region behind, where lay the places known as Maple Copse, Observatory Ridge, and Armagh Wood. Each one of these names will be written large in history. The lines in front of these were held then by a battalion of the Canadian Mounted Rifles, and other battalions came up later to assist them through the barrage, and few things finer, it is said, were ever seen in war than the way in which they came.

It is not easy to convey to one who has not seen it, or the effects of it, what such a bombardment as was concentrated here implies. Most people in

England now have some idea of a Zeppelin bomb. If you can imagine Zeppelin bombs dropping at a rate of scores to the minute over every acre of a given area, continuing unceasingly for hours, until before the end there is no spot where the holes in the ground do not coalesce and none where every sort of structure on the earth's surface is not a shapeless lump of ruin, you will have some idea of what the latest type of artillery bombardment means.

It is quite certain that the Germans had no idea that any human being could have lived through their artillery attack. When the infantry advanced they came, not charging, but with full kit and in regular formation, as if to occupy untenanted ground. They paid for it. This occurred in at least two places—in Sanctuary Wood and at Maple Copse. At Sanctuary Wood next day, when our men pushed through in the counter-attack, they found the ground covered with German dead, and the defence and successful holding of the position at Maple Copse was one of the finest incidents of this or any other fight.[1]

There was a position here held by C Company of a certain battalion. To the troops in reserve, no less than to the enemy, it seemed that the whole place must be obliterated, and that none of the defenders could survive. No shots came from it as the German infantry attack began, and an

[1] The above paragraph refers to work of the 5th C. M. R. under Colonel Baker.—*Sherbrooke Record.*

effort was made to send up another company to help, or rather, to take the ruined place over.

From the other side the Germans came on to take possession, carrying bombs in case any shred of resistance remained. There was a shred. The defenders waited in silence until the enemy was almost within bombing distance, and then, so deadly was the fire that at the first volley the enemy dropped their bombs and fled. A second time they came on, and again were driven back. The place thereafter was battered by artillery and drenched with rifle fire; but when night fell C Company was still in possession and the ground is ours now. The captain who had led the defence at this point throughout the day was among those killed towards the end. [2]

More hopeless, but even more splendidly dramatic, were some of the scenes enacted along the trenches. After the long bombardment, the enemy heralded his infantry attack by blowing up some mines, which besides the wreckage they wrought in our positions at that particular point also caused considerable loss of life. The actual advance of the infantry from the trenches was

[2] There is a confusion of persons here, not unnatural in the circumstances. C Company of the 5th C. M. R. was holding Strong Points 13, 14, 16, and 17, under the command of Lieut. W. H. Harton, whose letter is given below. The Captain referred to as among those killed towards the end was Captain H. J. Pitts of the 5th C. M. R. He was in command of A Company, and was detailed to reinforce C Company, which was being hard pressed. He lost his life in a gallant attempt to lead his men through the barrage.

preceded and partially concealed by a smoke barrage. To the dazed and broken remnants of the men in our trenches, then, the enemy was not visible until he was close at hand. Of one battalion few of the men who remained had any rifles left that were fit for use, even if the men had been fit to use them. But when they saw the enemy coming and close at hand, they climbed from the trenches to meet them and, some blind and deaf and staggering, they charged magnificently but pitifully to their deaths with no weapons but broken rifle butts, bits of entrenching tools, and in some cases their fists. I do not know where in war you will look for a more tragical or more thrilling episode.

It is of such men that the German communiqué foully says that the number of prisoners taken was small because the enemy ran away. The reason why few prisoners were taken was because the Canadians fought to the last with a pride of spirit which the Germans do not know, against guns and rifles and bombs, with broken rifles and bare hands.

The story of the death of Colonel A. E. Shaw will illustrate how the Canadian Mounted Rifles ran. After the horrors of the long bombardment, when the infantry attack came, Colonel Shaw managed to rally a small party of his battalion at a certain place amid a jumble of ruined earthwork of what had once been trench parapets and dugouts. Here they fought as well as ever men

fought, till only a few survived and the colonel himself was killed. With these last a major tried to retire—and two got home.

There is the tale of a captain who, finding himself in command of a remnant, some slightly wounded, all dazed and deafened, and mostly without effective arms, ordered them to go back and, when they protested, made them go. He stayed till the last man was gone, and the others, looking back, saw him empty his revolver at the advancing enemy, then fling it in the faces of the Germans and himself leap after it.

Of one battalion only one officer, of the machine gun section, survived unwounded. The losses in the two supporting battalions were less heavy than those of the battalions which were in the front line from the first, and they say that the gallantry and steadiness with which the supports came up through the barrage, going through death, with nothing but death and the chance of helping a comrade beyond, was magnificent beyond words.

Nor does anyone claim that the officers behaved any better than the men. Whenever the higher officers were killed, the N.C.O. took command with promptitude and coolness. Of a group of twenty stretcher bearers with one part of the force, five were killed, and those ought to have been killed fifty times. The surviving officers give great praise to the signallers, who did their best to keep communication going, and the mortality among them was as heavy as among any other branch.

As for the innumerable gallant deeds done by men in the ranks, one deserves to be recorded. It was by a private from Saskatchewan. Under the awful artillery fire, to which there was no replying with rifles, he had busied himself in caring for the wounded, and had bandaged one officer, two non-commissioned officers, and two privates, and was looking after them as well as he could behind a forlorn bit of battered sandbag breastwork out in the open, for the trenches were all gone. The fragment of his company was told to fall back, but he refused. He had got his private hospital there, and one of the wounded privates was a pal from his own small town in far Saskatchewan. So he stayed with his pal.

It is all a dreadful story to have to tell, but a splendid one. Long after the issues of minor engagements in this war are forgotten, and when everybody has ceased to care whether at any moment we gained or lost a hundred yards of ground or a mile of trench, the memory of how the Canadians fought against hopeless odds near Hooge will be remembered, and Canada and the Empire will be proud, for generations to come, of the men whose deeds I have mentioned and of their no less gallant comrades. Nor will Canada or the Empire ever forget—what every neutral in the world should be told today—how the Germans called these men cowards.

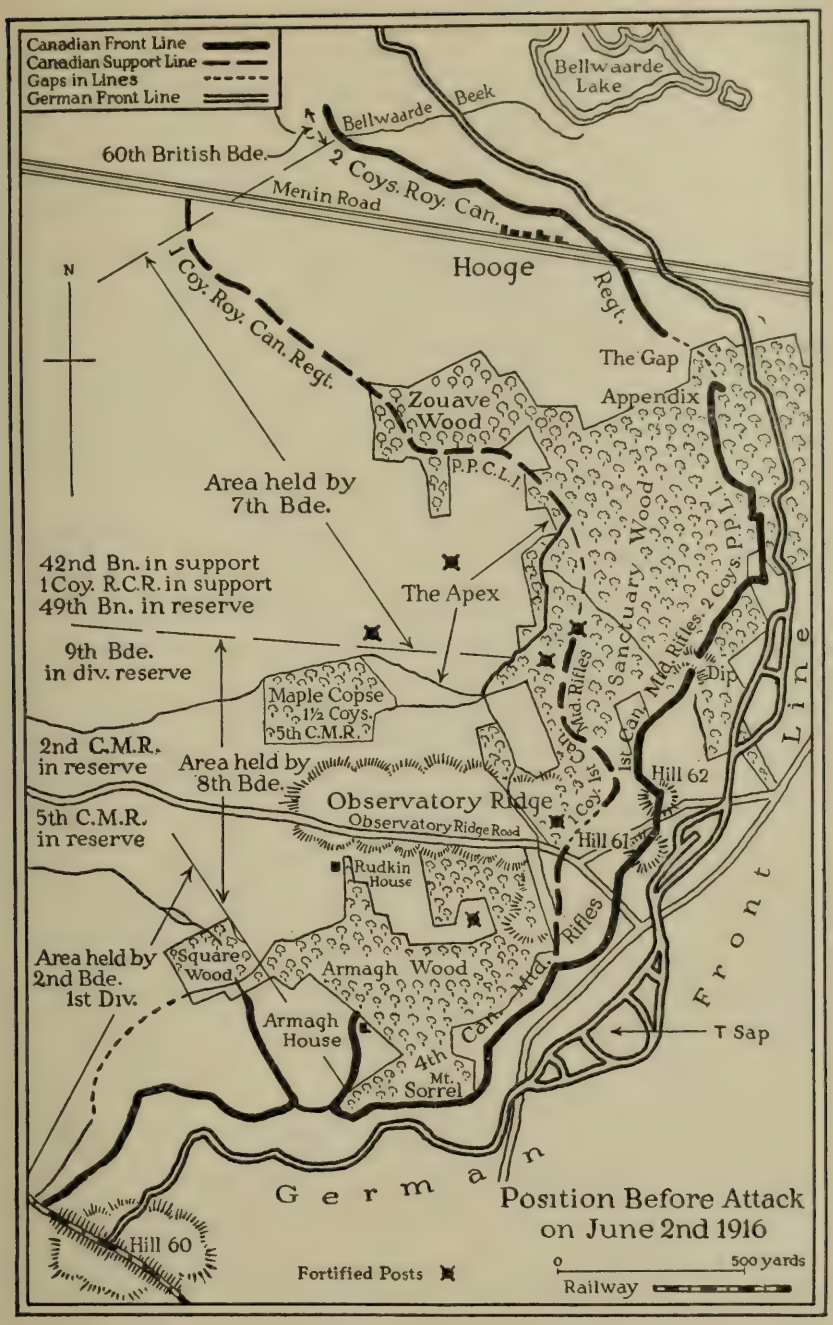
In conclusion, there is one point which must be recurred to. It is the subject of guns, guns, guns.

It must not be supposed at home that the overwhelming character of the artillery fire in this battle of Hooge, or Ypres, or whatever it comes to be called, was due to the disadvantages inseparable from a salient, and was exceptional. It would have been exceptional last year. There is every evidence that it will be normal hereafter.

No standards by which we may heretofore have measured our needs in guns and ammunition are now of any use, but just as from the beginning of its stationary condition this war has differed from all other wars, so, in the scope of the underground operations and in the stupendous scale on which the artillery is now massed and used, the later phase of this war differs no less widely from its earlier.

A fuller account is contained in Lord Beaverbrook's 'Canada in Flanders,' Vol. II, and is here reproduced with the accompanying maps:

Anyone at Ypres who had stood before the war on some high tower within the circle of the vast mediæval ramparts of earth, which have defied even modern artillery, and of the ancient grey walls which still look out across the calm waters of the broad moat and through the poplars which fringe it, would have obtained an excellent view of all save the outer edges of the field of battle. The Menin Road drives out over the flats for a mile, and then for another mile up the gentle slope



Position Before Attack on June 2nd 1916

to the ridge crowned by the ruins of Hooge. This road marks the left and northern boundary of the fighting with the exception of the bombing posts running down to Bellewaarde Beek. This ridge, with one main gap and many irregularities, curves round south-west and runs continuously to Mount Sorrel, where the fighting stops on the south. It represents, as it were, the rim of a saucer of which Ypres is in the central depression: and in war who holds the rim holds the saucer.

Standing on such a position and casting his eye along the ridge from Hooge, the observer sees across a mile or so of green water-meadows striped with the dark lines of high, luxuriant hedges, the northern part covered only by a few isolated and shattered trees, until he comes to Zouave Wood, which runs up into the first and greatest of the gaps. This gap isolates Hooge from the system, and through it the Germans can see right down on to the British trenches in the plain. Farther south the nearer slopes are covered with the great expanse of Sanctuary Wood, once so thick as to be almost impenetrable to the Guards in October, 1914, but now sadly thinned by gun-fire, and crowned by the slight eminences known as Hills 62 and 61. Beyond these comes Mount Sorrel, and the sector of the action is complete; for here the British line breaks suddenly back to the west and to the railway. But between Sanctuary Wood and Mount Sorrel there is a curious feature—Observatory Ridge—a long tongue of higher

ground, bare and barren, runs right back due west into the British positions towards Zillebeke village and lake.

Such was the position occupied by the 3rd Canadian Division on June 1st, 1916, as seen from the rear—a pleasant prospect if it were not for the signs of devastation, the white-scarred, headless trees, the upcast earth, and the growl of the guns which in the salient seem to come from every point on the horizon. Viewed by the Germans from the east, it did not look quite so strong, for they too held high ground dominating slightly in many places the line held by the Canadians.

None the less it is a strong defensive position, and Lord Ernest Hamilton in 'The First Seven Divisions' maintains with great show of reason that it was always the natural place from which to protect the town.

High ground may not possess today all the importance it had in the warfare of past ages, but the men on the hill still have one great advantage over the men in the hollow: they can see and their enemy is blind. Every trench and every movement of troops can be seen, and artillery fire can be directed and observed with complete accuracy without relying on aeroplanes and balloons, which are imperfect substitutes for direct observation and which bad weather may put out of commission. Furthermore, the life of the infantry in the plain becomes intolerable when every head is liable to show and become the target for immediate fire.

Life is too unpleasant and death too prevalent. The Canadian Corps, then, had to hold the plateau at all costs.

This description of the ground may make it easier to understand the positions occupied by the 3rd Division and the 1st Division on its right—for the 2nd Division was still far away on its old ground at St. Eloi, farther to the south, and was not called up to help till a later stage of the action.

The left of the line was held by the 7th Brigade under Brigadier-General A. C. Macdonell, and the right by the 8th Brigade under Brigadier-General Victor Williams. Two companies of the Royal Canadian Regiment, commanded by Lieut.-Colonel C. H. Hill, were firmly astride the Menin Road towards the farther side of the ruins of Hooge village. Their left sloped down through a series of bombing posts to Bellewaarde Beek, where they linked with the 60th British Brigade. Their right extended to the gap, where they were in touch with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. The trenches here had been partially demolished, and an attempt was being made to repair them at the time of the attack. Next to the right came the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, under Lieut.-Colonel Buller. They had two companies in the front line, the left-hand one on the slight rise on the northern boundary of Sanctuary Wood, the right-hand one in another gap or dip, so that the regiment had a depression on either side of its position. In the southern

section of Sanctuary Wood they met the line of the 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles of the 8th Brigade under Lieut.-Colonel Shaw.[3]

This last battalion held Hills 62 and 61 with three companies in the firing line and one just behind, but its junction with the Princess Patricia's was slightly broken at the dip. Next on the right came the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles Battalion under Colonel Ussher, with three companies in the firing line holding Mount Sorrel. Two platoons were just in the rear in the support trenches and in the communication trench leading to Headquarters. Here the 8th Brigade ended and the 2nd Brigade of the 1st Division took on the line.

Behind this front line there was a support line on the left of the position. From the Menin Road the strong and excellent support line trenches drive southeast. This line was held by the support company of the Royal Canadian Regiment and the support company of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, each backing their respective regiments in the front trenches. At a point northeast of Maple Copse and in the middle of Sanctuary Wood this well-marked support line ceased and broke into two separate systems of trenches. In the first place a series of communication trenches broke back sharply to Maple Copse and the southwest, making an acute angle, or apex, facing the Germans. From this apex the support line continued, though not at all points in a fully completed

[3] One company of the Princess Patricia's was in support.

condition, close behind our front-line trenches on Hill 62 and Mount Sorrel.[4] Behind these again was a series of fortified posts covering, in a somewhat irregular pattern, the ground between Zouave Wood and the southern slopes of Observatory Ridge. This in effect completed the system of front line and support defence. Further back, a second line nearer Ypres, known as the G.H.Q. trenches, represented the last barrier. It will be observed that there was no trench between Maple Copse and Square Wood.

The fortified posts on the north were held by the support battalion, the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles, under Lieut.-Colonel Baker, and on the south were in possession of the spare platoons of the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles and were in rear of their lines. One fort, however, was in the hands of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. Maple Copse was occupied by a company and a half of the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles, and the remainder of the latter were back in reserve. With them were the 42nd Battalion (Royal Highlanders of Canada) under Lieut.-Colonel Cantlie in support of the 7th Brigade, and also the remaining company of the Royal Canadian Regiment. A

[4] In consequence of this forking of the trenches in Sanctuary Wood, there are just behind the Hill 62 position two support positions, one behind the other—the first close to the front trenches and the second formed by the westward bend of the apex. I use the term 'support trenches' as meaning the first of these two lines, and in addition, of course, the trench running from the Menin Road to the point of the apex.

glance at the map will make the positions of the various units and the general scheme of defence clear, and tiring as such a recapitulation of companies and regiments may be, it is necessary if the story is to be in the least intelligible. The 49th (Edmonton Regiment), under Lieut.-Colonel Griesbach, was the reserve battalion of the 7th Brigade, and the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles of the 8th. The 9th Brigade was in Divisional Reserve.

Such were the dispositions of the corps, now under General Sir Julian Byng, who had on May 28th succeeded General Alderson, when the storm finally broke.[5] There had been warnings already. The enemy had been driving 'T' saps [6] out in front of their lines and linking them up so as to form a new trench in advance of the old one. Lieut.-Colonel Odlum, of the 7th (British Columbia) Battalion, launched a daring plan of counter construction at one place against the works and definitely checked their progress. The shelling of the last few days before the attack had been peculiarly heavy, and it is probable that the Higher Com-

[5] Lieut.-General the Honourable Sir Julian Byng, K.C.B., M.V.O., was born in 1862, and joined the 10th Royal Hussars in his 21st year. In 1901 he commanded that regiment, having done distinguished service in the Sudan, 1884, and in the South African War. He commanded the 3rd Cavalry Division with great brilliancy during the opening stages of the campaign in France.

[6] A 'T' sap is one of a series constructed in the form of a letter 'T,' so that the top of the 'T' may be driven out left and right, and, linking up with the others, form a new trench in advance.

mand had other information of impending mischief. It was undoubtedly this fact which induced Major-General Mercer and Brigadier-General Williams to make their tour of the trenches on that fateful early morning of June. They left at six in the morning and reached the Battalion Headquarters of the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles before eight o'clock. General Mercer was accompanied by his A.D.C., Lieutenant Gooderham, and General Williams by Captain Fraser, the Brigade Orderly Officer. Colonel Ussher conducted them up the communication trench at about a quarter past eight, and the party had either reached the front trench or was about to enter it when with a sudden crash the enemy's guns opened.

The 3rd Division was now to experience in its full fury the artillery preparation of the summer of 1916. All that had gone before was as nothing to this. The bombardment of 1915 had been feeble in comparison, and those of 1914 a mere sun-shower as compared to tropical rain. The soldiers of the 1st Division when they landed in France had, with their native humour, come to laugh at the Jack Johnsons from the 11-inch howitzers, though these were formidable to an army which then had no guns of an equal range. But a preparation in the modern style leaves very few remaining to laugh. The 2nd Division had a taste of the new shelling at St. Eloi, and its dangers had been intensified by a bad position and wretched trenches. But even so, all agreed that there was

no comparison between the gun-fire of April and of June, which was the heaviest endured by British troops up to that time. The Germans were directing their efforts against a strong position and sound trenches, yet they swept both out of existence as the autumn wheat is mowed down by the reaper. It was not merely a line they destroyed, but a whole area.

Indeed, the storm which burst on the 3rd Division at 8:30 that June morning was like a tropical tornado which presses men flat to the ground and suffocates them with the mere force of the wind, which uproots forests and hurls them headlong, obliterates all ancient landmarks and the houses and shelters of men and beasts, and leaves behind nothing but a tangled desolation from which a few survivors creep out scarcely sane enough to realize the catastrophe or to attempt to repair the damage. But here the blinding crashes overhead were not those of thunder and lightning, but of high explosive. The fragments which drove through the air were not bits of wood or masses of vegetation. They were steel and iron fragments which pierced the flesh, as the shock of the explosion stopped the heart and threw cascades of earth over bodies in which life still beat feebly or in which it was already extinct. The solid trenches melted away, and mounds and craters appeared where none existed before. A litter of broken wood, burst sandbags, and human remains cumbered the earth where it was not merciful enough

to bury them. And this tornado of man was let loose on a few acres which contained, perhaps, two or three thousand troops, and continued for the space of about four hours.

At the end, although the awful noise goes on, the shower of steel ceases. The guns have lifted to the second line. Here and there groups of survivors creep out, wild-eyed or stupefied, like men just risen from the tomb, to see the solid lines of the enemy advancing at a walk or a jog-trot. Every man acts according to his instinct. A few lie where they are and chance being taken prisoners. Some make a rush and crawl for the ruined communication trenches and face the barrage once more in the hope of rejoining their comrades. Another group resists desperately, grasping what rude and broken weapons remain to it, and dies in a hopeless struggle. Such in effect is the story of the front and support line companies of the 1st and 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles and the right-hand company of the Princess Patricia's between 8:30 and 1:15 of June 2, as their casualties will prove. That story must, however, be told in greater detail; but isolated facts cannot be understood without their environment.

The Generals and their Staffs were caught by the outbreak of this Inferno. It is idle to go into the question as to exactly how, when, and where the Divisional General died. There are many ways into such a controversy and no way out. All that is certain is that one of the first shells burst close

to the Staff, wounding Brigadier-General Williams,[7] and stunning Major-General Mercer. None the less, shortly afterwards General Mercer sent back a message, the last to come through from Mount Sorrel, asking for the howitzers to be turned on. After that he tried to get back to his post behind the lines and failed. Some say he remained with the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles Battalion for a time and was seen moving up and down. Soon, at any rate, he was seen no more by living men. He must have made another attempt to get back to his post and been killed on the way. His body was found with three wounds on it in Armagh Wood. He was buried at Poperinghe. There lie the mortal remains of Lieut.-Colonel Hart McHarg and Lieut.-Colonel Birchall, who served under him in the 4th Battalion of the 1st Brigade of the 1st Division. It is tragic to think that such a brilliant soldier, who had risen to the command of a division by sheer force of ability, should have died just as his new command was going into its first big action and needed his services so greatly.

The trenches of the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles and their garrisons thus vanished, and nothing more was heard of them save for the stories of small isolated parties which escaped. The last trench on the right and round the western bend of

[7] Brigadier-General Williams was taken prisoner. The Canadian Corps was unfortunate in thus losing the services of a soldier of such wide experience and proved skill so soon after he had taken over a brigade.

the salient escaped a little more lightly. The garrison held on till night fell, and then the survivors, finding the Germans coming up behind them in Armagh Wood, made good their escape to the lines of the 2nd Brigade on their right. Colonel Ussher collected some of the support company in a roofed-in trench, hoping to keep them under cover there until the German attack. Almost immediately heavy shells blocked both ends of the tunnel, and many were stifled before the party could break out of this living grave. This was the last attempt at any organized resistance. Major Dennison fought a rearguard action at point-blank range with the advancing Germans, and eventually got back into the second line with five men. Meanwhile, the shelling on the support line had been almost equally intense. The fortified posts held by the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles were blown to pieces and the platoons in them. One garrison perished and of the second garrison three men got away. In all some thirty or forty men of the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles got away and were rallied behind the support line. Their casualties were 637; the regiment had simply ceased to exist.[8]

On their left the 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles Battalion had fared little better. All through the

[8] The chaplain of the regiment, Captain A. G. Wilken, was in the trenches at the time of the attack. He acted as guide to a party of volunteer stretcher-bearers, who brought out the wounded and returned carrying up ammunition to the front line. He was killed during the final assault.

morning, their advance and support trenches being flattened out section by section, the survivors rallied in isolated groups wherever cover was left. In face of the attack these retired, some on the trenches in the Apex, and some on the Battalion Headquarters, where Colonel Shaw and the support company were preparing to put up a vigorous resistance. The casualties of the front companies speak for themselves. Of one company fifteen came out alive, of the second company fifteen, of the third twenty-three.

The German assault was delivered just after one o'clock, when their guns lifted from the front trenches and was preluded by the blowing up of mines, which were, however, outside our trenches and had no effect on the ultimate issue. The attack was launched from the southwest, for it was plainly visible to our men in the trenches by Hill 60. The watchers saw in the clear air four successive lines of gray-clad figures carrying packs and greatcoats advancing in the distance with the assurance of those who neither dread nor expect resistance; behind came the engineers with the material to make good the position. An indignant rapping from the machine-guns on Hill 60 greeted them; but the tide flowed on, unheeding. The lines reached Mount Sorrel and disappeared. The enemy, by attacking the corner of the line, advanced in effect *en échelon*—that is to say, their left flank reached Mount Sorrel and cleared it somewhat before their centre attacked the 1st Canadian

Mounted Rifles. The result was that Colonel Shaw in his redoubt found his right flank exposed and was the object of a concentric attack. None the less, the garrison put up a heroic fight against machine-guns, rifle-fire, and grenades. Colonel Shaw fell, and with him Major Palmer and his Adjutant, Lieutenant Rowles. Finally, when all the officers but two and most of the N. C. O.'s were killed or wounded, and the position was in danger of being surrounded, Lieutenants Key and Evans led the fifteen survivors back into a fortified post just in front of the Apex, where they collected some stragglers from other units and held on until relieved the following day. This dogged defence was of the utmost value, for the second line at this point was desperately weak and quite unable to resist a resolute assault.[9] Of the support company and Battalion Headquarters about seventy-one men survived. The total casualties of the regiment were 367. It was now the turn of the Princess Patricia's to withstand the assault, which came upon them at about 1:30 p. m.

Regiments which possess some special name as opposed to ordinary battalions, which are designated by numbers, and which are, therefore, picked

[9] Lieutenant Evans was greatly assisted in his defence by Private Murphy, of the machine gun company of the 8th Brigade, who beat off every German attack, although his gun was twice buried by shell-fire. Lieutenant Beatty of the same company also showed conspicuous gallantry and ability in organizing the machine-gun defence of the second line. Finally he was shot through the leg, but continued at his duty until he fainted from loss of blood.

out by over-zealous correspondents for particular praise for their share of work which all have done equally, are not always popular. This is certainly the case in the Imperial service; and yet no Line regiment would grudge the Guards their reputation, for what they have won in praise they have earned, and they have worn their laurels with a studious modesty.

The Princess Patricia's had two companies in the firing line, one in the communication trench leading up to it past Battalion Headquarters with a tail in the support line, and a fourth entirely in the support line trenches. The right-hand company in the firing line was, like the Canadian Mounted Rifle regiments, blown out of its trenches, and the survivors took ground in communication trenches held by the support company. At 1:30 p. m. the German wave lapped round the left of all except the front-line company commanded by Captain Niven, which turned about and volleyed into the Germans' right rear.

This company kept its position in the front line and maintained it for eighteen hours after the bombardment began, although the enemy attempted to penetrate the gap on the left and had seized the dip to the right of the trenches on the rise which they held. Captain Niven had with one hand to fend off attempts to bomb his men at right and left down the trench, and with the other to turn and enfilade with excellent result the Germans who were pressing in on either flank. Yet he,

who was in command, is chiefly anxious to explain in his report that this was the result of a pure accident, as the enemy had over-ranged his trench and the heavies and trench mortars were bursting twenty yards behind, save for the right platoon, which mustered only three survivors. The enemy then attacked the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry companies in the communication trenches and began to bomb his way to the support line and the Apex line, which possessed at that time scarcely any defenders. Colonel Buller rallied the support platoons in the communication trench and pushed them up to a counter-attack to save the support line. Not satisfied with the rate of their progress through the shattered trench, he climbed outside to urge them on and was killed instantly.[10] He possessed one of those fearless and impetuous natures which made him the fitting commander of a famous regiment and brought him the soldier's death he would have desired.

There followed a dark and bloody *mêlée* between the Germans and the Canadians in the communication trenches, the former trying to press on and rush the support line and the latter trying to build blocks down the communication trenches to stave them off until that line could be fully manned. At

[10] General Macdonell says of Colonel Buller: "He fell as the splendid soldier and gallant-hearted gentleman would have wished, in the forefront of the battle at the head of his regiment, all ranks of which, it is not too much to say, idolized him. The Empire can ill afford to lose such a man, a 'Chevalier sans peur et sans reproche.' "

one time the Princess Patricia's in the communication trench, though attacked across the open simultaneously on both sides, resisted the enemy, thus emulating the traditions of the famous British regiment which, when attacked from behind, simply turned its rear rank about and fired in both directions.[11]

Major Critchley, Staff Captain of the 7th Infantry Brigade, going up after we had retaken the communication trenches, said that he found the bodies of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry lying in succession behind six blocks in the trench, showing that in their retirement they had held each block until a new one was built. In effect, the garrison of each block had perished while the new one behind was being built. The losses were, of course, very severe, but in the meantime the reserve company of the regiment had come up into the support line behind, and the vital position was saved; for if the support line had gone, the whole of the Ypres salient would at that hour in the day have gone with it, as the subsequent argument will show. Colonel Buller and his men held the fort at the critical hour, and gave Brigadier-General Macdonell time to bring up his reserves.[12]

[11] The Gloucester Regiment (28th Line) at Abercrombie's landing in Egypt in 1801. The regiment was accorded the right of wearing its badges both in front and back of its headgear.

[12] During this fierce engagement Captain J. D. Macgregor, the doctor of the P. P. C. L. I., displayed the greatest devotion, remaining three days at his post in the firing line without rest dressing the injuries of the wounded, often in places where there was no cover from fire.

In the meantime, Captain Niven, some hundred yards to the northwest, was still clinging to the knoll of trenches in the front line amid an encircling tide of Germans. As has been already stated, his right-hand platoon had been destroyed by the bombardment and Lieutenant Hagerty, its commander, killed. Lieutenant Molson then took charge, and with great gallantry dug out some of the men buried alive, although the trench was ranged to a nicety. He was shot through the jaw, and the section was abandoned in the end. Lieutenant Triggs, in the nearest sector, was severely wounded soon afterwards, and Lieutenant Irwin, the only remaining subaltern, was hit later on in the day. Captain Niven, though hit himself, continued to command and move about, as he was by this time the only remaining officer of his company. The telephone dug out was smashed in and all communication with the battalion lost. None the less, two heroic runners managed to get through and to report that the company were still holding out. Some of the worst cases of wounded were even carried back by the stretcher-bearers under an appalling fire to the support line. At dusk Lieutenant Glascoe was sent up from Battalion Headquarters, and Captain Niven handed over his command and attempted to go back and report to Battalion Headquarters. In the course of his wanderings he came to a dressing station, and, after his wound had been dressed, started once more for his isolated company, which after eighteen hours was still left

among the encircling Germans as lonely as the survivors of the Flood on Mount Ararat. He was promptly hit again in the breast.

At 2:30 a. m. of the 3rd, Lieutenant Glascoe, seeing that the whole surviving party would shortly be completely surrounded, exercised a wise discretion and got his remnant safely back to the support line. "During the bombardment," says Captain Niven, who certainly has a right to be heard, "this company behaved splendidly, every man holding his own and inflicting heavy losses on the enemy wherever the opportunity occurred." [13]

It was during the general retirement from the east of Sanctuary Wood that two of our guns were lost. Those guns were 18-pounders, and had been brought up to within 400 yards of the front line and established in gun-pits. They were to be used only in case of emergency, as their fire would be sure to disclose their position to the enemy. Owing to their position and purpose they were known as 'sacrifice guns.' Lieutenant C. P. Cotton, of the 1st Divisional Artillery, was in command of them.

A German aeroplane found these guns on Friday morning (June 2), and particular attention was immediately paid to them in the midst of the general bombardment of our trenches and positions.

[13] Casualties: Officers, the Princess Patricia's. *Killed*: Colonel Buller, Major Jones, Captain Cornish, Lieutenants MacDonnell, Wanklin, Hagerty, De Bay, Fyfe. *Wounded*: Major Gault, Captain and Adjutant Martin, Captain Niven, Lieutenants Scott, McDougall, Molson, Currie, Irwin, Triggs, Glascoe. 8 killed, 10 wounded—18 out of 22 present at action.

Lieutenant Cotton's gun-crews suffered, and he reinforced them with Sappers James E. Hood and Chambers, who were in charge of an emergency wireless station situated within a few yards of the gun-pits.

Cotton opened fire at 1:45 in the afternoon, and, assisted by his three surviving gunners and the two sappers, continued to fire until the enemy came over Observatory Ridge to within a few yards of the gun-pits. He then ordered a retirement. Sapper Hood rushed into his wireless dug-out, destroyed his instrument, and then escaped with a bullet through the bone of his arm. Lieutenant Cotton and the others of the gun-crews were not so fortunate. They died near the gun-pits—they and their guns having served their desperate purpose to the end—and so they too made the great sacrifice.

The attack still continued to spread up to our left. Between two and three o'clock in the afternoon the extreme German right had come up to assault our extreme left at Hooge. Two attacks were, however, repulsed with great loss to the enemy by the Royal Canadian Regiment.

None the less, the position at three o'clock was one of the very gravest danger. On a frontage of three battalions the Germans had overwhelmed our front and right support lines on the crest of the ridge and annihilated or decimated the defending regiments. From Maple Copse they could be seen advancing in strong force on the high ground of Ob-

servatory Ridge into the very heart of our position, and they were also attacking farther north down the various communication trenches which led to the support line.[14] Our left at Hooge had held firm, but it was now utterly in the air, save for Captain Niven and his men, and the triumphant enemy were rapidly sweeping behind that line of defence. The support trenches having been taken on Hill 62 and Mount Sorrel, there was nothing in front of the German left and centre except the Apex line to Maple Copse. It was, therefore, a matter of life and death to hold on to these left-hand support trenches to the Apex and to Maple Copse. But the line was very weakly held for the task of resisting 2,000 Germans attacking from higher ground and flushed with victory. There were, in fact, about three companies of the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles, the remains of the 1st and 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles, perhaps a hundred all told, and what was left of three companies of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. The situation looked so dangerous that the famous colours of the Princess Patricia's were entrusted to Lieutenant Scott, who took them back to Brigade Headquarters to avoid any possibility of their capture. To the left, from Zouave Wood to Menin

[14] These bodies were unquestionably strong German patrols. They developed in this action a course of procedure now generally adopted, but then new. The assaulting column sends out in advance large parties, whose duties are not merely reconnaissance, but the occupation of advance positions in front of the captured line, which are to be taken by fighting if necessary and used to repel counter-attacks.

Road, was one company of the Royal Canadian Regiment in support of their companies in the front line trenches, who could not abandon their ground. In addition, the Staffs of the 3rd Division and the 8th Brigade, who were primarily concerned, had lost their commanding officers. From Mount Sorrel and the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles they had had no news since 9:15 a. m., and did not know whether General Mercer and General Williams were alive or dead, or whether the trenches there still held. On the other hand, the 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles had continued to report till just before the German attack at 1:15 p. m. that they were holding their ground and were in no need of reinforcements. None the less, at noon the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles were moved up from Brigade Reserve to Zillebeke under heavy barrage fire.

The three factors which prevented a serious disaster were undoubtedly the hesitation of the enemy to pursue an advantage, the strenuous resistance of the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles under Colonel Baker, and the energetic action of General Macdonell of the 7th Brigade in taking advantage of the precious moments of delay and pushing every man he could command, beg, or borrow into the threatened section.[15]

[15] Valuable reconnoitring work was done in this connection by Lieutenant E. Basset, of the 21st Battalion, who was attached to General Macdonell's staff for instruction. It is a curious fact that nearly all the officers from the home regiments out for this purpose were wounded in the fighting of June.

Bellwaarde Lake
Bellwaarde Beek
Menin Road
Royal Can. Regt.
Hooge
2 Coys. K.R.R.
2 Coys. R.C.R.
Area held by 7th Bde.
Zouave Wood
The Gap
Appendix
1 Coy. 42nd Bn.
49th Bn. in reserve
The Apex
P.P.C.L.I.
Sanctuary Wood
Front Line
Dip
Zillebeke 200 yds.
2 Coys. 42nd Bn.
Maple Copse 3 Coys. 5th C.M.R.
Area held by 8th Bde.
German
Observatory Ridge
Observatory Ridge Road
Hill 62
Hill 61
Rudkin House
New
Square Wood
Armagh Wood
Area held by 2nd Bde.
Armagh House
Mt. Sorrel
7th Battalion
5th Battalion
Old German Front Line
Hill 60
Fortified Posts
Position After The Attack on June 2nd 1916
500 yards
Railway

The Germans at Le Cateau, and at the first and second battles of Ypres, had always stopped just when victory seemed within their grasp. Nor on this occasion were they wanting to themselves. There are, however, no doubt, explanations. One was in a document found on the body of a German officer which laid down precisely the position they were to occupy and entrench, and this they had attained except in the neighborhood of Rudkin House.[16] Our barrage was heavy behind them, and it was not until 9 p. m. that they were reinforced by an additional two thousand men in spite of our heavy artillery.

By two o'clock the right of the 7th Brigade was in grave peril. The Brigadier at once ordered up the reserve company of the Royal Canadian Regiment to help. Already ten minutes before he had sent up two companies of his support battalion, the 42nd, to assist the hard-pressed 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles in Maple Copse and beyond. These two companies undoubtedly just saved the situation, and a delay of an hour or so in dispatching them might have proved fatal. The remaining two companies of the 42nd, which were back in Ypres and beyond, were ordered to come up to the support line trenches. The 49th (Edmonton) Battalion (Col. Griesbach), which was right back in Brigade Reserve, was ordered up to the Ypres

[16] The Germans had laid down two alternative lines to take and entrench. One, 'the gold line,' in case of complete success, another, 'the iron line,' farther back, in case of a partial success. In effect, they reached the gold line.

ramparts, and reached there about 8:30 p. m. Not content with this, at 3 p. m. the Brigadier asked General Butler, of the 60th British Brigade, on his left, to lend him a couple of companies to help hold the support line. The request was granted, and two companies of the King's Royal Rifles took up the left-hand section, south of the Menin Road, thus enabling the Royal Canadian Regiment companies to shift farther to their right and strengthen the critical point of resistance at the Apex.

By 5 or 6 p. m. General Macdonell had got into the support line and Apex line five entirely fresh companies—a welcome relief to the nerve-worn and shattered units which, under the most tremendous shell-fire, had been struggling there from eight in the morning against heavy odds. He had also the 49th well up in reserve, while the 8th Brigade had three companies of the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles up on the right of the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles in Maple Copse in the communication trench running back in the direction of Zillebeke. The reinforcements thus amounted to eight fresh companies or two battalions. It is impossible to speak too highly of the resource, vigour, and moral courage of the General, who took the situation in charge on his own initiative, or of the dash of the men who came up through the barrage over flat ground, every yard of which could be seen by the enemy.

For the Brigade and Divisional Staffs the period was one of doubt and anxiety. Information was

hard to get from the front, and what news came in was generally bad. Between five and six in the evening General Hoare Nairne, C. R. A.,[17] took command of the 3rd Division, and Lieut.-Colonel Bott, 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles, of the 8th Brigade.[18] But to the units hastily gathered under Lieutenant Evans in the fortified post, to the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, and the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles, the strain was well-nigh intolerable, for the shelling on the support line had been almost as intense as that on the first line. The 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles were nearly blown out of Maple Copse, and had to shift from trench to trench more than once as the Germans got the range, but they held on. On the left the enemy had in no way abandoned his intention of getting into our support line, and about 2:30 p. m. some forty succeeded in rushing it.[19] There was a sharp, short hand-to-hand struggle, in which the Princess Patricia's bayoneted the lot. The occupants of the fortified post at Maple Copse were annihilated by shell-fire, and Maple Copse, held by the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles, was so heavily shelled that the whole wood was smashed

[17] Commander of the Artillery of the 3rd Division. This was the Lahore division lent to the Canadian Corps, since the 3rd Divisional Artillery had not yet left England.

[18] Major G. A. Stevens (Royal Fusiliers), Brigade-Major of the 8th Brigade, took command in place of Brigadier-General Williams, and commanded it with marked ability from 8:30 a. m., June 2, until relieved by Lieut.-Colonel Bott.

[19] These were strong combative patrols sent out according to the new plan mentioned above.

flat. They had to make new trenches, as the old ones became untenable. This was done under the eyes and fire of the enemy, who loomed over them on Observatory Ridge in unknown numbers and from invisible positions.

Major Hugh Walkem arrived with the first relief—a company of the 42nd—about 2 p. m., and finally got into position in the Apex between the Canadian Mounted Rifles and the Princess Patricia's. The other company of the 42nd took up a place in the support trenches.[20]

Through all this period there were constant rumours, fortunately untrue, that the Germans had penetrated the line at one point or another. It was here that Sergeant Jones, 42nd (Royal Highlanders of Canada), made a peculiarly daring reconnaissance, lying out all night within thirty yards of the enemy and observing the line of their digging and the direction of their fire.

In the meanwhile, the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade on the right was also in a position of grave peril, for the enemy in Armagh Wood were practically behind its left rear. At 2 p. m. they were already in Armagh House, but were chased out by a patrol of the 5th Battalion under Captain Collum. The only course left open to the 5th Bat-

[20] Captain Molson and Lieutenant Ewing, of the 42nd Battalion, both showed great resolution in holding out with their men at the Apex during the critical hours of the German attack. Captain Molson was wounded at the Ypres ramparts on the way up; Lieutenant Ewing was also wounded later, but both went on throughout the engagement.

talion (Western Cavalry), which held the line here, was to throw its left out at right angles to its main line of trenches along a communication, and not a firing, trench in the direction of Square Wood, and to establish themselves firmly in the wood itself. This they did, and remained till evening watching the movements of the enemy, who were entrenching themselves firmly on the ridge just behind Rudkin House. To the north the Canadian Mounted Rifles were in Maple Copse 600 yards away, but the ground between was fire-swept and trenchless. In the meantime, the 7th Battalion (British Columbia) was brought up to support the 5th Battalion (Western Cavalry). The 2nd Brigade offered to make a counter-attack in the course of the afternoon with the ten platoons available in this line, but the offer was rejected by the 1st Division, which considered, rightly enough, that the force was insufficient for so long a frontage. The Germans, therefore, remained undisturbed. None the less, the Brigade was warned that a counter-attack would almost certainly be made as soon as sufficient reserves came up.

One counter-attack of a minor character was attempted from the Maple Copse side of the trenchless area by the 3rd Division. The 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles, three companies strong, had arrived in the trenches in front of Zillebeke at 6 p. m. They linked up with the 7th Battalion of the 2nd Brigade on the right, who had come up

to support the 5th Battalion of their Brigade, and attempted to create out of the old trenches there a third line in case the enemy should break through. Finally, as dusk drew on, two companies of the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles were ordered forward to Maple Copse to attempt a counter-attack on the enemy at Rudkin House. It was eleven o'clock when they reached the Copse and met Major Allen, of the 2nd C. M. R.'s. Colonel Baker had just fallen mortally wounded while walking up and down behind a new trench his men were digging under heavy fire and encouraging them by his coolness and example.[21]

The 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles succeeded in maintaining their position in Maple Copse. Shelled to pieces for hour after hour, and hunted from cover to cover, they yet held on, and this fact was in no small measure due to the great firmness and heroic disregard of death exhibited by Colonel Baker. He inspired his men by sheer personal magnetism and by the example of a splendid devotion to duty. Other men did their share in saving the line; still, but for him it might not have been saved at all, and in that case June the 2nd would have been associated with a great disaster to our arms.

The attack of two companies of the 2nd C. M. R.'s in the dark against an unknown German posi-

[21] Major Draper took over the command of the 5th C. M. R.'s when Colonel Baker fell. Although hit himself, he carried his Colonel, mortally wounded, out of action, and then returned to conduct the defence.

tion held by troops whose numbers it was impossible to estimate was not a very promising venture, and it was not pressed home, the attackers being set to the more feasible task of trying to dig a trench linking up Square Wood and Maple Copse. The Battalion sustained very heavy losses. This attempt likewise failed, the shell-fire in the open proving too heavy; but Captain Leduc, of the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles, advanced with great daring as far as Rudkin House and satisfied himself—as proved to be the case—that the enemy's new line was being built well behind it. The 8th Brigade had by now suffered between 1,800 and 1,900 casualties out of their total strength, and it was time for some fresh troops to take a hand in the game.

The losses, indeed, in both the 7th and 8th Brigades had been heavy, but the support line, in spite of its extraordinary zigzag conformation and the wide gaps which intersected it, remained firm. On the left the Royal Canadian Regiment[22] still held its original position with a resolute calm, though its right was only supported by Captain Niven's company, and they retired at dawn on June 3rd. Behind it and in the centre the support line trenches were intact, and the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and the 42nd

[22] Colonel Hill's defence of Hooge from June 2nd to 5th will always be remembered as a fine military feat. There was nothing to prevent the Germans, after they had broken through the main line, rolling up his right flank and rear except the coolness and courage of his regiment and the skill of his own dispositions.

still clung to their positions; just in front of them Lieutenant Evans was still holding the fortified post, and no shelling could shift the Canadian Mounted Rifles from Maple Copse, and beyond that to the south the 5th Battalion of the 1st Division were in Square Wood and the front line leading to Hill 60. General Macdonell was up and down his front encouraging his men by his very presence—and, indeed, there was much need of encouragement. The movements of the Germans on the overlooking heights were shrouded in darkness and uncertainty. They had been heavily reinforced.[23] There was no remission of the shell-fire, which alone gave flashes of light in the darkness except for the white flares which occasionally illumined the ridges in front, and might portend the sudden assault of an overwhelming enemy.

Help, however, was at hand. By the early afternoon of the 2nd the Higher Command had been alive to the danger of the attack, and were informed as to the true position. The determination to retake the lost trenches was arrived at, and as darkness fell the corps began to move in the direction of the enemy. Everywhere in the night was heard the tramp of marching men, and the dim outlines of endless columns flowing steadily towards the east were visible on every road.

[23] Our outposts by Hill 60 reported strong masses of Germans moving up at 9 p. m., June 2nd, towards Mount Sorrel.

The official account quoted above continues with the story of the recapture of part of the lost ground, which does not here concern us. Of greater personal interest are the narratives of those who survived the engagement. Lieutenant W. H. Harton, who was in command of C Company, as mentioned in note 2, wrote as follows to Major Ralph Stockwell, formerly of the 5th C. M. R., who had been invalided to England some weeks before:

Royal Free Hospital,
Grays Inn Road, London, W. C.,

June 18th, 1916

My dear Major:

I understand you met my little wife when you were in London and she told you all about me. I arrived here on Thursday. The poor old 5th missed their proverbial luck on June 2nd. Were you aware that we lost five officers killed and Hewson was the only unwounded officer? I understand there are only about 300 men left. A reinforcement of 300 has already gone to the 5th. On the glorious 2nd of June I was O. C. of C Company and we held S. P. 13, 14, 16, 17. We were under a hell of a bombardment from 8:30 a. m. all day. Heavy shells came like hail. The shell that fixed me killed six men as well. I was unfortunate enough to get a second wound, another shell burst about a foot from me when I was lying in the trench wounded, and I got a chunk in my right buttock

which penetrated three inches. The boys were game and behaved splendidly. Of course, I had the 11th platoon with me and they more than justified the high opinion I had formed of them. Sergeant Gifford came to me twice during the night and asked me to let them leave the trench. But my orders were clear and I did not give him permission. He was game and stuck it out.

About 2:30 a. m. on the 3rd they carried me out, at which time I was all in from loss of blood, pain, and morphine. When I reached the Field Hospital, they amputated my left leg and next day sent me on to Boulogne. I have quite a lot of pain now. I suppose it is to be expected, but I tell my little wife that I haven't any at all.

If you are in London any day I wish you would spare an hour or two and drop in to see me. The visiting hours are 2:30 to 5:30 p. m., but you could probably get in any time.

I am afraid I shall not be much good to the 11th Hussars now. Anyway I thank God I got it in a good desperate scrap. I was always afraid I would get sniped on some working party or when going to or from the trenches. We have the satisfaction that our scrap will go down in history, and I personally don't regret the result. The old 7th Infantry motto covers the situation—Pro Patria et Gloria. Their sentiment is all right even if they are a little slow in backing it up by force.

I don't know if you are aware of the fact. It was the 5th C. M. R. that checked the Germans in

Maple Copse and then drove them back. But the Battalion was practically wiped out. It makes the Charge of Balaclava pale into insignificance. It was a glorious feat. The 5th are now immortal. If I let myself go any further you will think I am getting delirious, so I will conclude.

Yours sincerely,

W. H. HARTON,
Lieutenant 5th C. M. R.

To Major Ralph Stockwell

The Adjutant of the Battalion, Captain (later Major) W. Rhoades, wrote to Colonel Baker's sister on June 4th from the front:

Belgium,
June 4th, 1916

Dear Miss Baker:

You will have heard before this of the death of your brother, our dear Commanding Officer. The sympathy of every officer, N. C. O., and man of the Regiment is with you—there is not one, I know, of those of us who are left, who would not have gladly given up his own life could your brother have been spared. He was much more than our Commanding Officer—he was a friend, in the truest sense of the word, to all of us. To me especially, as I was probably always the closest to him, he has been like a big-hearted brother. No

man could possibly have been better loved or more respected. Words—written words—are a poor medium through which to express one's real feelings—I want to tell you so much but my thoughts seem to get ahead of my pen. Perhaps I should wait a little longer before writing—but you will want to know the circumstances connected with his death, and as I was with him all the time I will try to tell you—necessarily briefly—what I can.

From 9:00 a. m. on the 2nd of June until 9:30 p. m., we were subjected to an intense fire from guns of all calibres. The Battalion was 'in support'—about 500 yards in rear of the first line trenches—and in such a position that we could not get any adequate protection from the constant rain of heavy shells which seemed to search out every corner of our line. To keep a stout heart at such a time—when you cannot see your enemy, or get a chance to return any of the fire you are subjected to—is no easy task, but for over twelve hours your brother not only made whatever dispositions were required from time to time, with cool and calm judgment—but by his cheerfulness and calmness set such an example to us all that none could be otherwise than truly unafraid.

He always had a cheery word to say to each one as he passed along the line, and the answering smile was always forthcoming—indicating clearer than anything else could have done, the love and perfect confidence each felt in his Commanding Officer. Our casualties were very heavy, and at

about 8:30 p. m. the enemy fire increased to its utmost intensity—so much so that for the next hour all we could do was to sit with our backs to the parapet of the trench and do what little we could to help those who were struck from time to time. From the intensity of the fire we judged that an attack would shortly be made on this section of our line, and had just decided that the few of us who were left—seven was all we could muster here—could not hope to do very much to stem it, when a shell burst among us, killing or wounding all of us who were left, with the exception of Major Draper, who escaped with a bad shaking from the force of the explosion. Up to this time the Colonel's cheery voice had always been heard, whenever a shell or bomb burst very near, calling "Are you all right, Captain?"—and I would answer, "Yes, Sir, are you?" I was not badly hurt and called out, "Are you all right, Sir?" Getting no answer, I felt over for the Colonel, and found him lying unconscious, but breathing faintly. I cannot attempt to tell you how we got our dearly loved Commanding Officer out of the fire trench, across the fringe of a wood for about 100 yards, until we got into a communication trench which afforded a little more shelter than the one we had left, and where there was a chance of getting help—or how we escaped further injury on the way, continually torn up as it was with bursting shells and littered with a tangled mass of fallen trees, tangled telephone wires, and hundreds of shell holes.

O.C.
5th
C.M.R.
Lt. Col. G.H. BAKER
Killed
in
Action
2/6/16
R.I.P.
Drawn by F.B. Mitchell.

Here we were able to render 'first aid,' but though everything possible was done, the Colonel never regained consciousness and died just as we got to the nearest dressing station, at about 12:15 a. m. on the morning of the 3rd of June.

It may help to lighten your grief a little to know that your dear brother's face was not marred in any way—he looked to be asleep, very peacefully—and that we were able to give our beloved Colonel proper burial. The casket was made by the pioneers and your brother was buried with Military Honours yesterday afternoon at 5 p. m. in the New Military Cemetery, Poperinghe, service being conducted by the Chaplain of the 3rd Canadian Division—Major A. W. Woods. The few remaining officers of the Regiment, and others from the Brigade, acted as pall bearers, followed by every other N. C. O. and man who could possibly be spared. I am enclosing a sketch of the cross we have already erected, and I do not have to tell you that anything and everything you may wish further will be done.

With very deepest sympathy,

Yours most sincerely,

W. Rhoades

A special memorial service was held in Christ Church, Sweetsburg, on June 18th. The rector, the Rev. W. P. R. Lewis, B.A., spoke of Colonel Baker in the following terms:

He was the son of a brilliant father and a saintly mother. He had everything to sacrifice and he sacrificed everything. I can speak this afternoon because I have offered my services, in so far as my calling permits, freely to the needs of our beloved country. Matters are so serious that I do not see how any young man without ties can stay at home. I consider that man the happiest and luckiest who is able to go.

Harry Baker had social position, he sacrificed it; he had a successful professional business, he sacrificed it; he had a promising parliamentary career, he sacrificed it. No young man has more things to sacrifice. We who knew him best could say nothing but what was good of him. His loyalty, sincerity, his modesty and withal his ability made him a marked man in our community. Our Eastern Townships were better thought of because of him and of what was in him. Loyalty was the warp and woof of that family and he lived and died a witness to that fact. We do not feel that his loss will be in vain. As in ancient times the blood of the martyrs was the seal of the church, so the blood on our roll of honour makes more precious, more consecrated, the principles he represented that seem so consecrated in us now and that assure us of the victorious fruitage of that sacrifice.

At the end of his address, the rector called upon General Sir Sam Hughes, Minister of Militia, who said:

Comrades and friends, I am glad of the opportunity to say a few words about my friend and your friend, Lieut.-Colonel Harry Baker, whose memory we honour today. I knew him and his late father many years, and it was with pleasure we welcomed him to Parliament in 1911. He was a capable and active member, always interested in the advancement of his Province.

He was especially interested in militia matters, and that led to our personal friendship. When the war broke out he, as a cavalry man, offered to raise a regiment of horse, but there were no cavalry needed then. Later I was able to authorize him to raise a regiment of mounted rifles, and he organized the gallant battalion which has so distinguished itself, at such terrible cost.

Finding no work for cavalry at the front he was one of the first to volunteer his battalion for infantry work. There were too many officers after the rearrangement, and I offered him a legal position at headquarters, far superior to the rank he held, but he said he would stick by his boys from the Townships, and he did, to the end.

His heart and spirit were with you, and though he lies in Belgium, I feel that his spirit, which must be where the spirits of all noble men go who die fighting for their country's liberties, will be with you. His influence will be felt here for many years to come, and his name will be revered by the people of this province, and throughout the Dominion.

Immediately after the receipt in Canada of the news of Colonel Baker's death, the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Borden, issued the following statement in the press:

I have read with the deepest regret the long list of casualties which has just been announced and which will bring sorrow to so many homes in Canada. The Canadian forces held an important and honourable portion of the British line, and it is evident they were subjected to an intense bombardment followed by an infantry attack in great force. The splendid gallantry with which their counter-attack was delivered and the lost ground recovered maintains the glorious record established in April of last year by the First Division.

Among so many gallant officers who are named in the list it would be invidious to particularize. I may, however, be permitted to mention one of my colleagues in the House of Commons, Lieut.-Colonel G. H. Baker, M.P. He was a man of the highest ability, of fine character in every way, and his death is not only a great loss to his immediate friends and relatives, but to the public life of Canada, in which, if he had lived, he would certainly have filled a very distinguished place. Without distinction of party, all of his colleagues in the House will accord to his family and relatives deepest sympathy. I mourn his death as that of a very dear personal friend.

At the opening of Parliament on January 18th, 1917, Sir Robert Borden spoke as follows:

I had known Lieut.-Colonel George Harold Baker for some years before he entered this Parliament. He is the first member of the Parliament of Canada who has made the supreme sacrifice for the cause of liberty and justice, the cause for which this Empire is fighting in this war. He came of a family that had great traditions in public life. His grandfather was in the Legislature of the province of Quebec as far back as 1834. His father had a service of no less than twenty-five years in this Parliament, and, I believe, of nine years in the Legislature of the province of Quebec. Lieut.-Colonel Baker came into this Parliament in 1911. His voice was not very often heard here, but, knowing him well, I had the warmest appreciation, not only of his character and ability, but of the great promise which he gave of usefulness in the future public life of this country. I do not think it is too much to say that there is no place in the public life of Canada to which, if he had been spared to serve his country in this Parliament, George Harold Baker might not have aspired. I remember very well, when he spoke to me about his offer of military service, the overmastering sense of duty to his country which he evinced. I remember well my conviction that it was not possible for me to interpose any objec-

tion in the face of such a sense of duty as that which possessed him. He took up his work in a characteristic way. He knew the necessity of absolute thoroughness of training, and he searched not only Canada, but the other side of the Atlantic, and even India, to have associated with him a man who could undertake the duties for which he believed himself not adapted by previous training and experience. He went to the front. I remember that shortly before he left I had the privilege of making him acquainted with a very distinguished American gentleman who was on a visit to Ottawa at that time. This gentleman, after conversing with Lieut.-Colonel Baker for a short time, said to me, "If your Canadian officers and men are of the type of that man I do not wonder at the splendid record that they have made at the front." We know of the splendid spirit and magnificent courage and patriotism that have animated, and still animate, the men of the Canadian Expeditionary Force; but I venture to think that no finer spirit, no truer patriot, no man of more brilliant promise, ever left the shores of Canada to make the supreme sacrifice beyond the seas than Lieut.-Colonel George Harold Baker. Somewhere in France is his grave. I believe that in the House, as in the country, all who knew him mourn his loss. I feel that in him the country has lost a man of the highest possible promise in public life, and personally I know that I have lost not only a loyal follower, who was most truly

an encouragement and a support to me on many difficult occasions, but one of the most valued intimate friends I have ever known since I entered public life.

What Harry Baker, as he was affectionately called by his friends, might have become, and what he might have done for his country in the peaceful arts from which he was diverted by the exigencies of the time can be realized, even in imagination, only by those who, like Sir Robert Borden, were closely associated with him in political life. After a year has gone by one's main impression is still the sense of something elementally bright and eager suddenly brought to naught:

"Making it momentany as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream,
Brief as the lightning in the collied night,
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,
And e'er a man hath power to say 'Behold!'
The jaws of darkness do devour it up."

Yet it would be a mistake to regard his career as merely one of promise—it was one of achievement, both in politics and in the stricken field. His comrades, strengthened by his cheery looks and words as he went among them making his dispositions for defence, held

their ground; his fellow-officers and the men of his battalion who survived carried on to other fields the inspiration of that glorious, though terrible day. It is in the spirit of such men, and in such memories, rather than in extent of territory or long continuance of empire that there rests the imperishable glory of the British name. Sidney and Wolfe will be an inspiration to the world when the battles they fought are forgotten; and the same is true of many young Canadians who, but for the call to arms, would have given their energies to the upbuilding of the Dominion. Materially it is an incalculable loss; spiritually it is an immeasurable gain.

Of the more personal side I cannot trust myself to speak. Personality is a mysterious element conveyed by a glance of the eye, a tone of the voice, a ringing laugh or sudden gesture, and the sense that these are irrevocably gone makes it all the harder to attempt to record such impressions—evanescent yet abiding—in written words. But this outline of Harry Baker's career is intended for those who knew him, and who do not need to be reminded of his personal qualities. His high sense of public duty, his courage, and devotion to great ideals are attested by what he did; those who came into daily contact with him

will not fail to remember also his kindliness and cheerfulness, his ready wit and responsiveness to the jests of other men, the even temper with which he bore the little trials that make up most of our lives, his steadfastness and resourcefulness in times of real difficulty, and the sympathetic help he gave to those who deserved it, or without deserving it, were in need.

J. W. CUNLIFFE

June 2nd, 1917.

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